

Is COVID-19 Going to Influence our Human-Space Relationship? A Policy Approach from Greece

Eleni Komninou^a

Summary

As Greece was in lockdown, Greek cities resembled ghost towns and its cityscapes reminded us of a dystopian movie. Empty streets and motorways, people afraid to go outside, and a cloud of uncertainty hanging above people's minds encapsulated life during these unprecedented times.

Greece has been affected by the virus in similar ways as other European countries: counter-urbanization, quiet urban environments, and lifeless streets have become the new normal. COVID-19 disturbed the everyday lives of people as well as shifted urban balances. As a result, uber-trends have emerged on how we use space, which have altered the relationship of citizens with the urban space.

Space is inherently connected with infectious diseases. In this context, the pandemic crisis imposed new challenges on how we perceive and engage with space both indoors and outdoors. The aim of this article is twofold: to discuss whether the relationship with space has changed due to COVID-19 and been reflected in policies, and to contribute to knowledge about this pandemic's geographies by reflecting the Greek reality.

All in all, what is common is the uncertainty of the future while the level of change regarding how we use and perceive space is yet unknown.

Keywords: COVID-19, impact, cities, space, planning

Contact

^a elkomnin@uth.gr

University of Thessaly, Department of Planning and Regional Development, School of Engineering, Pedion Areos, Volos, Greece

Introduction

While this paper was being written the world was facing the second wave of COVID-19¹. The world has faced several pandemics throughout history, but modern society was most familiar with these events through the media and chronicles and was not prepared to respond and mitigate the effects of such unprecedented conditions. February 2020 was a crucial beginning, after which the whole world seemed to fall into a loop. In a short time, the virus spread worldwide establishing a new reality to live in. People were forced to adapt to a new lifestyle, changing their habits and consequently their relationship with space.

COVID-19 disrupted everyday life and shifted urban balances in Greece affecting every routine daily event in the urban tissue, such as commuting, being outdoors, social gathering, working from home, etc. The confining measures taken during the lockdowns (first lockdown March 13, 2020 – May 18, 2020; second lockdown November 7, 2020 - May 17, 2021) for the protection of public health introduced new norms of living, including a total ban on traveling and social gatherings, empty halls, citizens afraid to go out, and a decrease in downtown activity. In-person gave way to online, shared spaces were closed, interactions were minimized or abolished, and open spaces were empty.

Space is connected inherently with infectious diseases. In this context, the pandemic crisis imposed new challenges on how we perceive and engage with space both indoors and outdoors. As a result, uber-trends (which are explained later in the article) are emerging on how we use space. In many cases, even the restricting orders, including the “stay at home” order and “social distancing” were not enough to convince citizens that the urban environment was safe (James, 2020). What is more, these rules have altered citizens’ relation with urban space.

There is a debate over whether pandemics, besides putting a burden on humanity, may also be contributing to new and improved ways of using/ designing space. What is certain is that changes are happening and we should leverage them to our benefit. The question is how strong these changes are and whether they will remain enshrined in government policies and adopted intuitively by citizens in each case. In Greece specifically, time will tell if the changes to space and city-making process due to COVID-19 will be solely government-led or will be taken up in a bottom-up way.

The aim of this article is twofold: to discuss

whether the relationship with space has changed due to COVID-19 (and to what extent) based on policies adopted, and to contribute to knowledge about pandemic geographies by reflecting the reality in Greece.

This study concerns a theoretical examination of the impact of COVID-19 on the way we use space. Lockdowns and the restricting orders made primary research challenging. Therefore, spatial observation was chosen as the most appropriate method. This method granted the author a more specialized knowledge of the conditions and an insight into specific circumstances, ultimately raising her awareness of the examined issue (Unwin, 2006:108).

The paper is organized in five sections. It starts with the introduction, followed by a section discussing pandemics and urban planning. The third section is the analysis dedicated to the European and Greek experiences during the health crisis. Finally, the paper ends with the observations demonstrated in the findings’ section and with the conclusions.

Pandemics and Urban Planning

Human mobility and interactions with different populations, living conditions, and animals have caused waves of widespread illnesses throughout history. Officially known as pandemics², they have plagued humanity many times. The design of cities reflects major cultural and technological trends, including major public health crises. The following describes how urban landscapes have been shaped as a result of governments’ responses to pandemics over time.

Urban design and planning have constantly evolved under the threat or disaster of pandemics. Starting in the 14th century, urban renaissance practices (decongestion of overcrowded areas by enlarging cities’ boundaries, creation of bigger public spaces) were a response to the bubonic plague (Lubell, 2020). Similarly, yellow fever in the 18th century was confined by widening boulevards and building the early suburbs (ibid).

“The 19th century is when the city becomes the real focus of infectious disease” says Emily Sargent³ (Sargent, 2020 in Wintle, 2020). Back then, urban interventions such as modern urban sanitation facilities and water systems were used as planning means to stop contaminations (Glaeser, 2020). London built a new sewerage system to eliminate cholera, transforming vast areas of marshland.

Later, open spaces, parks, and boulevards were created on this land, which defines London's cityscape to this day (Wintle, 2020).

The industrial revolution in the 19th century introduced new building regulations to prevent or even mitigate the respiratory illnesses that peaked in overcrowded poor neighborhoods throughout Europe (Berg, 2020). An aftereffect of industrialization was the expansion of cities to unregulated suburban areas and vast urban complexes. Modernism trends – well ventilated and clear spaces, single use zoning, along with waste management, re-organization of residences, and slum clearance, were established in the 20th century to restrict the spread of tuberculosis, typhoid, polio, and Spanish flu (Glaeser, 2020).

Over time, cities became safe places to live in while the urbanization process brought larger numbers of people from rural areas, increasing urban density significantly. "Health concerns have always steered urban planning and the design of cities" as Moritz Maria Karl⁴ declares. Similarly, Wintle (2020) avows that today's cities are partially the outcome of the history of pandemics.

Given that infectious diseases are easier to spread in over-crowded and polluted areas, most pandemics can be understood as anti-urban and against human sociality by nature.

Various scholars (see for instance Matthew and McDonald, 2006; Sharifi and Khavarian-Garmsir, 2020) acknowledge the vulnerability of vast urban areas to infectious diseases and see their high density as a disadvantage. Such a disadvantage will be greater if actions against future disturbances aren't taken. Herein, the concept of urban preparedness enters; a concept that has been at the forefront of planning for many years (Matthew and McDonald, 2006). As Glaeser (2020) quotes "the COVID-19 pandemic creates such uncertainty because it strikes at the heart of our urban world."

Analysis

Le Corbusier's statement "Hygiene and moral health depend on the layout of cities. Without hygiene and moral health, the social cell becomes atrophied" is more relevant than ever (Wintle, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic attaches new meanings to the relationship between humans and space. The transformation and use of space as a result of new policies have become a subject of study and discussion among scientists in the

field – architects, designers, planners, and social geographers already researching the amount and form of future changes.

One generally accepted meaning of policy is given by Walker (2000, p.13): "a policy is a set of actions taken by a government to control the system, to help solve problems within it or caused by it, or to help obtain benefits from it" Which management policies were adopted by governments to restrict the spread of COVID-19 and how did these affect our relationship with space?

The governing authorities of each country reacted differently to the pandemic, particularly in the beginning in the absence of cooperation. There was no single decision-making logic as various policymakers had different goals and objectives, producing different social and spatial policies. As a pandemic is a phenomenon of many variables (people, social structures, nature, infrastructures, and organizations, etc.), external forces, and interactions, this complexity should be accounted for by the policymaking process, making it an even more difficult task for the societal actors (Walker, 2000).

COVID-19 rates and impact depend on the current situation of each country/place, its health services, response actions, as well as available emergency mechanisms. Governments imposed confining though widely differing measures worldwide aimed at the mitigation of COVID-19 (Crego and Kotanidis, 2020). These included border closures, bans on traveling and social activities, remote work, and quarantine, the severity and duration of which varied in each country. Yet these policies shared a common objective: social distancing. The question at the heart of this paper is: How have citizens been using space under these restrictions and which related tendencies appeared, since contagious illnesses tend to be anti-urban?

In Greece, non-democratic approaches were chosen to battle COVID-19, especially compared to other countries with more open strategies⁵. The severity of the situation allowed the Greek government to introduce strict containment measures under Article 44(1) of the Constitution⁶ (Act of Legislative Content – Act of 25 February 2020) as an emergency response to the pandemic. This was done via fast-track legislative processes and introduced: mandatory medical checks and pharmaceutical treatment, confinement and vaccination, closure of public spaces and suspension of artistic and sports events, ban on traveling to and from islands with few exceptions, prohibition to leave home except for specific

reasons (e.g. to buy food or for health reasons) and only with a certificate or justification text message to the appropriate authority (Alexandre et al, 2020).

The state of siege (Article 48 of the Constitution) was not declared to tackle the pandemic because of the dark spot in the history of Greece with emergency measures impacting fundamental rights (Alexandre et al, 2020). Nonetheless, measures to restrict the pandemic were also measures of personal constraint.

Everyone boasted of the good management of the pandemic during the first wave since mortality rates were better lower than other countries. Indeed, Greece ranked within the least affected countries of the EU during the first wave (Crego and Kotanidis, 2020). But this picture was fictitious and the situation got out of control afterward, proving that the early measures were unsuccessful. A curfew, ban on demonstrations, and higher fines were added to the list of restrictions in the second lockdown, ranking Greece as one of the worst places for someone to live during a pandemic (amnesty.org., 2020).

In particular, Greece was ranked first among 53 countries for having the strictest lockdown and the lowest movement of people (-47,7%) while scoring 84.25 out of 90 regarding the dictatorship state (Chang et al., 2020). Do confining measures trespass international human rights law more when the response to COVID-19 is mostly authoritative? Amnesty International has received a large number of complaints by many countries, including Greece, related to police incidents of violence in case individuals did not comply with protective measures (amnesty.org., 2020).

Similar to other countries, Greek strategies towards COVID-19 were entirely based on societal control. For instance, one control mechanism that has been established to track citizens' movement (SMS, signed statements indicating the route, etc.) (D'Eramo, 2020). Greek police were responsible for checking whether citizens were complying with the measures, issuing high fines if they didn't. Citizens were thus '*separated*' into law-abiding and illegal according to their degree of compliance to the measures. Many were afraid to go outside in case of encountering police. As an illustration, Greek cities resembled ghost towns and their cityscapes resembled dystopian movies during the lockdowns, with empty streets and motorways and irritated and frustrated citizens experiencing such harsh conditions for the first time.

The most visited and crowded streets and highways in Athens and Thessaloniki were like deserts and once noisy cities were silent. Many Greeks left the urban centers to return to their hometowns. A total of 154,621 vehicles exited Athens before the second lockdown, reaching a peak in November 2020 (Ministry of Citizen Protection, 2020). This was triple the vehicles that exited during the first lockdown (50,597) (Ministry of Citizen Protection, 2020). These numbers are explained by Greeks' mental health due to fear and exhaustion in the second lockdown. It is undeniable and commonly accepted that the rapid pace at which a city functions is a cause for non-pleasant feelings such as stress, weariness, and even depression (Tulumello, 2017). Under these conditions, the choice of many city dwellers to escape their norm is justified.

The counter-urbanization phenomenon wasn't obvious only in Greece. Londoners and Parisians preferred to move from the metropolis to places closer to nature that were less crowded (Bender, 2020). The London exodus started in 2020 with almost 700,000 people⁷ leaving the capital, while a recent study revealed that 55% of young Londoners were considering leaving their home city post-pandemic (Urban Jungle, 2021). The same survey evidenced a 73% increase in those moving to more rural areas. Furthermore, a correspondence between the distance from the city of London and outbreaks has been proven with Sheffield, Birmingham, Leeds, and Manchester documenting fewer cases of COVID-19 (Ghosh et al, 2020).

In Italy, returnees (to home cities) are estimated to number between 80,000 and 100,000. Depopulated villages across the Italian countryside are gaining back life. Incentives are given by the authorities (grants, programs of regeneration, national strategies, and investments in rural planning) aimed at making these areas viable on an annual basis and making efforts to keep the returnees as permanent residents (D'Ignoti, 2021). Massive escapism indicates that citizens felt threatened in their own homes and sought protection from risk in the safety of big cities' more rural surroundings.

The use of open spaces presents different patterns conditional on the context and city. What is concerning during a global pandemic is the way people interact within a specific geographical space as James (2020) argues. Individuals' response to the emerging environment is a unique experience, altered by their view of COVID-19 varying across time and space.

A declining physical appearance in public space and the social interactions that entails is a profound effect of COVID-19 (Garrido et al, 2020). The choice to use public, semi-public, or private spaces is not personal anymore but guided by power structures such as governments (James, 2020). The Greek government decided to decrease green and open areas (m² per citizen) by restricting or blocking access to major spacious areas. This decision can't be scientifically justified by any argument over isolating the use of well-ventilated shared spaces within the cities (Leontidou, 2020). Consequently, the presence of groups of citizens in open spaces may have been minimized though individual visits have risen⁸.

Activities in public spaces include gatherings at public transport stops, meeting points such as street corners and seating areas, crosswalks, etc. Conversations and interactions in street cafes and restaurants, at after-work drinks, or during athletic activities were diminished because of the stay-at-home order and remote work (James, 2020). According to Galloway (2020), fewer office workers engenders less street traffic.

Lower density and physical distancing is the intention or behavior of most of us during COVID-19 (Glaeser, 2020). Crowded queues and the sharing of common urban infrastructure like parks and cultural places were minimized or entirely wiped out (Glaeser, 2020). Besides these activities, cities in the time of COVID-19 do not have much to offer beyond quiet urban landscapes and crowded health services infrastructure. Free public and shared spaces constitute an antidote to the pandemic in cities; restricting access to them drove the population to remain within their apartment buildings.

The aforementioned observations indicate Greek peoples' fear of the disease. They don't want to put themselves in unsafe situations (where there is a high population density) due to the risk of infection. Most importantly, they are worried about the impact of their actions on others (spread of infection) (James, 2020). Based on these observations, a change in visiting patterns is noticeable, as users of public spaces may choose alternative hours to visit public spaces (avoiding rush hours that they deem unsafe).

Another phenomenon on the rise is cycling⁹. Internationally, many cities have recently chosen to create new cycling paths or expand existing ones as well as create pedestrian routes. Famous examples include Bogotá, Berlin, and Mexico City (Null and Smith, 2020). In the context of claiming

the streets back from the cars and the lower use of public transport, Milan, Paris, and Barcelona are increasing walking and cycling spaces, offering a bike-friendly design, and creating superblocks to improve the use of public space (Knight, 2020). Reportedly, Milan is working on permanently widening sidewalks and replacing vehicle lanes with 35km of bike lanes (Honey-Rosés et al, 2020). The most important aspect of these urban interventions is their permanent character.

Similarly, many Greek cities have led the way in providing better urban environments. Farkadona, Karditsa, and Rethimno were the first to reclaim public spaces for their citizens during the first lockdown. Specifically, Karditsa and Rethimno were ranked among 3,136 European cities as the first and second (in the categories of small and big cities, respectively) during the European Mobility Week. Furthermore, ten Greek cities were awarded the Sustainable Urban Mobility award on July 9, 2020: Igoumenitsa, Larisa, East Samos, Agios Dimitrios, Nea Propontida, Heraklion, Alimos, Trikala, Grevena, and Neapoli-Sikewn (naftemporiki.gr, 2020). Namely, outdoor gyms were constructed in Farkadona to promote safe physical activity during lockdowns (Herk and Aivalioti, 2020). The goal was friendly and accessible to all cities.

In contrast, the municipality in Katerini decided to close all public seating areas by removing the benches from the piazzas. This repressive action claimed to prevent social gatherings and overcrowdedness by violating citizens' institutional right to public space. In the same vein, the entrance to the seafront in Volos was prohibited by the General Secretariat for Civil Protection (Table 1).

Since parks and open spaces allow effective social distancing due to their scale, what hygiene rules led to the sealing off of forests, major parks like Pedion Areos and the National Garden in Athens,; the closing of public beaches and seaside fronts in Thessaloniki, Volos, and Patras; and urban furniture removal in Katerini? (See Table 1).

Danish cities were an exception to the 'closing open spaces' rule during the lockdowns. The decision to keep public spaces open and allow outdoor activities was grounded on their vital role in a healthy civic life. Instantly, Copenhagen's public spaces attracted more visitors during the lockdown of March and April 2020 compared to fall 2019 pre-COVID-19 (Gehl, 2020). In essence, a key indicator of how healthy and functioning a public space is the presence of people.

Table 1. Policies regarding open spaces in Greece

City	Policies	Examples
Athens	Sealing of major parks, public spaces	Pedion Areos, National Garden, Filopappou Hill, etc.
Thessaloniki	Blocking access to the seaside front	Guardrails all over Nea Paralia
Volos	Blocking access to the seaside front	From early morning to 12:00 pm
Patras	Sealing of organized ¹⁰ beaches	From 2:00 pm to 8:00 am
Ioannina	Blocking access to the lakeside	From 2:00 pm to 8:00 am
Katerini	Removal of urban furniture	Central piazza

Source: Author

Gehl's survey (2020) researching public life before and during the spring 2020 lockdown revealed:

- Increased uses of recreation play and exercise versus a drop in downtown activities (shopping, etc);
- Local places gained popularity – increased traffic in more remote areas, outside the city center; and a
- Rise in the use of public spaces by children and older people.

In London, for example, parks were open with some exceptions. However, the UK government set specific guidelines to ensure visitors' safety, such as: "use all areas of the park that remain open not just the paths"; "Please take all your litter home with you"; and "Boroughs and other parks services will make decisions on closing facilities to the public" (London.gov.uk, 2021).

In Greece, a widespread feeling of fear prevented citizens from moving freely, particularly in case of encountering police and being issued a fine. But the social human nature eventually prevailed over repression tactics. A rise in mobility through open spaces - urban and peri-urban parks, forests, watersheds, etc. - has been observed as citizens re-connect with nature and its healing power. Individuals have been spotted alone or in pairs and, in most cases, weren't congregating - practicing social distancing¹¹.

People re-discovered open spaces in Greece. The Mediterranean climate and proximity of open space made Greeks take green spaces for granted, knowing they could visit the outdoors whenever they wanted. Suddenly, this was no longer the case. Being denied access to public spaces led Greeks to value their existence and be more positive about their neighborhoods. The need to be outside was predominant with Greeks visiting even the most remote parks to escape confinement.

In the middle of the pandemic, the Greek government and the Hellenic Ministry of Environment and Energy took advantage of the crisis to vote for a series of new policies and regulations that otherwise would have not been a priority, such as the 4759/2020 New Spatial Planning Law, with a direct impact on space and the environment. Some of the regulations concern specific timelines for the drafting of local urban plans, initiatives for organized business activities (i.e., financial, building regulations, etc.), and energy efficiency and environmental upgrading of buildings, among others.

What is more, an enhanced urban and regional planning context was introduced dealing with years of spatial planning problems. However, the proposed fragmented and short-term spatial interventions with long-term effects on the environment are raising many objections regarding the validity of the new planning law. Objections are mostly focused on the ministry's choice to deregulate building outside of the urban planning zone. Those who object claim that this choice was rather easy and pragmatic, instead of shaping the environment for sustainable development through city expansion plans and allowing citizens to build legally while minimizing bureaucracies (Constitution Article 24).

Findings

Policy choices reflect governmental goals. In the case of Greece, the goal was to minimize the spread of COVID-19. Government measures to block access to open and green spaces were based on faulty logic as citizens became trapped on narrow pavements and *polykatoikies*¹². Public space was transformed into a getaway space during the confinement period, which was characterized by exclusions, restrictions, and monitoring.

The successful Greek management of the virus in the first wave had an impact on citizens' freedom and small-scale entrepreneurs' and producers' survival. These latter categories of Greeks were battling both the virus and a loss of livelihood even as the government tried to support them financially (tax reductions, repayable advances, unemployment benefits, etc.).

The Greek government chose measures of repression and confinement instead of shielding the social state economically and hygienically. Keeping people indoors was a way to cover up the weakness of the health sector (defined by understaffing, lack of supplies and equipment, etc.) even though Greece's tactics to restrain the spread of the disease can be characterized as swift and effective during the first wave (OECD, 2020). The pandemic interrupted the country's recovery from the economic crisis entering a *kykeon*¹³ of health and economic imbalance.

At the core of the Greek policies was a decrease in everyday and social interactions, which were characterized by a lack of solidarity and support and control of the use of public spaces. Greek cityscapes were ruled by military law, resulting in curfews and a suspension of constitutional human rights law and cultural needs (Constitution Article 5). Responsibility was shifted solely on citizens - civic responsibility. Ultimately, the public was treated as the enemy (Tufekci, 2020).

The horizontal character of policies means that the regulatory and monitoring measures concerned the entire population without discerning between the healthy and the infected. As D'Eramo (2020) calls them, these 'blanket policies' are discriminatory since they enlarge the gap between social groups; not everyone has equitable access to green space. In essence, the pandemic revealed a shortage of public spaces, walking areas, and cycling facilities.

Sunlight and natural ventilation are important factors in the battle against contagious diseases. The outdoors, with its attributes such as supply of vitamin D, exercise, oxygenation, and fresh air, is considered a weapon against COVID-19 and contributes to building a strong immune system. Closing the parks further burdened people's confinement and led to congregations in high-density downtown areas and over-populated apartments (Kalandides, 2020).

In either case, closing the parks means that potential visitors will gather elsewhere without the appropriate distance that an open space

offers. It is also anticipated that people are more likely to rebel against social distancing measures the more you keep them indoors.

Conclusions

Overall, this article aimed to investigate humans' relationship with space as a result of COVID-19 policies and to demonstrate the reality in Greece during the pandemic. From the author's perspective, the significance of these issues lies in the trends that they disclose and their impact not only on individuals, but also on society and policy-making processes in general. Further research could show how long-term these effects will be.

This article has illustrated a change in the way we use indoor and outdoor space during pandemics. What changed the most (beyond the use of private space) was "the role, function, and surveillance of the public spaces" (Vatavali et al, 2020). COVID-19 has mainly affected social interactions, which are inherently connected to space. Therefore, confinement measures have altered citizens' relationship with space. While the perception of people about public space varies and depends on several factors such as age, gender, region, city, country, disease impact, and others, one thing Greek citizens shared was an appreciation for it during the lockdowns.

Given that the existence of urban parks is critical to overcoming contagious illnesses, policies should be focused on re-attracting the interest (both governmental and citizen) to green spaces, as well as their funding and maintenance. Closing and re-opening the parks is not considered a viable policy for pandemic management. Policies should be sustainable, scientifically justified, and adaptive, ensuring a sustainable public life (Gehl, 2020). Ultimately, public policies on urban life, open spaces, and infrastructure facilities need to be re-aligned according to the needs of the different groups and the dynamics and challenges of each time.

Policy-making is a multi-faceted process concerning the whole system: people, social structures, the environment, and organizations. Every part of the process should include the policymakers and the stakeholders, as well as the preferences and behavior of people. The consequences of any given policy will be perceived and valued differently according to the stakeholders and interest groups.

Walker's statement that "the word uncertain emphasizes that the choices must be made

on the basis of incomplete knowledge about alternatives that do not yet physically exist, for a future world that is un-known and largely unknowable” can be used to describe the policy-making process during the COVID-19 era everywhere in the world (2000, p.13). This is why regrettable results are always possible: many scientists, doctors, and politicians admitted afterward that the decision for such a long-term lockdown was misguided, considering that the effects of confinement were worse than the virus itself, inducing mental health issues, domestic violence, suicides, residence auctions, etc. (Λινοῦ, 2020 in in.gr, 2020).

This is why the need for a sustainable, human, and decentralized urban development is more urgent than ever, so as not to face such post-apocalyptic scenes again. The management of space is a matter of policy and should aim to contribute to public health. What is most important is that public policies ensure the safety, health, and well-being of society.

Planners and planning have a central role to play and should work with both the private and public sectors on the following crucial areas to secure appropriate urban defenses against pandemics: land uses, transportation planning, movement and access, open spaces, production and consumption of basic goods, and human-centered strategies for evacuation and quarantine (Matthew and McDonald, 2006). In the hope that the current management of urban space will define a sustainable future, urban planning should be focused on the prevention of such crises connected to infectious diseases. It's time to directly link well-being, quality of life, and health to the use of public space via urban planning.

Public justice and the social protection system also need to be more effective and efficient. The Greek government's measures to support the health system, businesses, and local shops cannot, in any case, be considered sufficient. Many owners or employees lost their jobs and saw income loss as a result of the mishandling of the situation, while discouraging the use of open space had an impact on physical and mental health. On the whole, the pandemic is a chance for authorities to reconsider decision making, including as an integral part of citizen and community participation, especially since citizens' and local communities' use of public space during confinement periods became more important than ever.

The feeling that pre-crisis, lively public places have been lost because of the preventive COVID-19 measures is shared despite the different conditions across countries and cities and their different responses to the health crisis. It must be remembered that humans are emotionally connected to places.

Despite a clear re-approach to the use of space on a neighborhood and city scale, the trends (necessity to use public space, next to fear, government's control and policing in open spaces during the lockdowns) that are being established in the cityscape are worrying, at least in Greece. A full manifestation of these trends has been avoided up to the present, as people have mostly stayed at home. Individuals have done their best to protect themselves, especially under national conditions of pandemic management (marked by a poor fiscal situation, an undermined health system with no support, as well as a weak social support system).

In conclusion, a complete alteration to our perception and relationship with space post-crisis is possible if the emerging trends are to be established as the new normal. The pandemic should be seen as an opportunity to implement integrated planning as the core system for human safety, without policing and patrolling citizen behavior in relation to health measures. Urban space should not negatively influence public health, and there are still challenges and unknowns in the use of space for the public good. What seems to be known however, is that we should trust our cities, as after each crisis they are ultimately reborn. Eugene Ionesco's saying 'You can only predict things after they have happened' seems like an apt summary of this sentiment.

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Notes

- ¹ The content of this article refers to the period from February 2020 to March 2021 in the pandemic's development and management.
- ² Pan•dem•ic /pan'demik/ (of a disease) prevalent over a whole country or the world (LePan, 2020).
- ³ Architect and researcher at Berlin's Technical University.
- ⁴ Curator of the 'Living with Buildings' exhibition.
- ⁵ Compared especially to northern countries like Denmark and Sweden (Crego and Kotanidis, 2020).
- ⁶ However no state of emergency was declared.
- ⁷ Just under 10% of London's population.
- ⁸ Author's observation.
- ⁹ Because other individual activities such as swimming were forbidden.
- ¹⁰ This term is used in Greek for beaches where commercial activities such as cafés, restaurants, etc. are located and allowed by the

municipalities to manage a portion of the sand area.

¹¹ Author's observation.

¹² The term is used in Greek to describe buildings higher than 2-3 floors where many families live in individual apartments *poly - many and katoikies-residences*.

¹³ A Greek term used to describe a complicated situation that is hard to manage while it derives from the ancient Greek word which meant a cocktail of drinks.

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